

Today, nearly two million Americans claim Greek ancestry, including Congressman Bilirakis, whose grandparents emigrated from Greece to the United States in the early 1900s.

During floor debate on H. Res. 1024, Bilirakis emphasized the struggle for independence of the Greek people, and the historic and dynamic relationship that defines the deep American-Hellenic ties.

Below are excerpts from Rep. Bilirakis's prepared floor statement on H. Res. 1024:

"Madame Speaker, I rise today with great pride and in strong support of H. Res. 1024 recognizing the 187th Anniversary of Greek Independence and celebrating Greek and American democracy.

"Like the American revolutionaries who fought for independence and established this great republic we call the 'Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave', Greek freedom fighters began an arduous struggle to win independence for Greece and its people 187 years ago.

"...The lessons the Greeks taught us then continue to provide strength to victims of persecution throughout the world today. By honoring the Greek struggle for independence, we reaffirm the values and ideas that make our nation great.

"...Socrates, Plato, Pericles, and many other great minds throughout history warned that we maintain democracy only at a great cost. Our Greek brothers earned their liberty with blood as did our American forefathers. The freedom we enjoy today is due to the sacrifices made by men and women in the past.

"...Each time I perform my constitutional duties, I am doing so in the legacy of the ancient Greeks and our American forefathers. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "To the ancient Greeks ... we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves ... American colonists, out of

gothic darkness.”

“We celebrate Greek independence to reaffirm the common democratic heritage we share. And as Americans, we must continue to pursue this spirit of freedom and liberty that characterizes both of these great nations.”